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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: ISLAMISTS AND OPPOSITION PARTIES, WAR OF WORDS
OVER HAMAS

REF: A. AMMAN 2668
[1](#)B. AMMAN 2955

Classified By: Charge d, Affaires Daniel Rubinstein for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. In the run-up to municipal elections, pro-government editorialists and smaller opposition parties continue to take swings at the Islamic Action Front (IAF) for its perceived backing of Hamas, mid-June takeover in Gaza. The degree of IAF backpedaling is in the eye of the beholder, however, while the Front seeks to regain traction by bringing the popular debate back to Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) action in Gaza and the West Bank and other perceived GoJ disappointments on the Israel front. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) As reported ref A, the IAF,s failure to come out against Hamas, takeover in Gaza played poorly for many Jordanians, and briefly put the organization on the defensive. Opposition parties took particular umbrage at an IAF-led meeting to discuss developments and the Front,s subsequent establishment of a "follow-up committee" widely seen as supportive of Hamas, actions.

[1](#)3. (U) The war of words continues as we get closer to municipal elections scheduled for July 31. The press reported in early July that IAF Secretary General Zaki Bani Irsheid had, after some delay, agreed to sign off on minutes of a previous meeting of the opposition parties, Higher Coordination Committee (HCC) which contained an implied condemnation of Hamas, action. Some reporting spun this as an IAF political failure. At least one press report, however, suggested that the other parties in the HCC (a long-standing institution which brings the IAF together with 13 other, much smaller, opposition parties) had agreed to adjustments in the minutes to accommodate the IAF,s position. Subsequently, Arabic daily Al-Dustur reported that "widespread disagreement" continues within the HCC, with the IAF pressing the other parties for participation in meetings of its follow-up committee. In response, per Al-Dustur, the HCC reaffirmed the importance of Palestinian national unity and its previous stance in favor of the legitimate PA government (i.e., that of President Mahmoud Abbas). Both Al-Dustur and pro-government daily Al-Rai reported that the dispute nearly led to fistcuffs between IAF and other opposition party figures.

[1](#)4. (C) In an attempt to regain traction, the IAF has returned to its time-tested formula of highlighting Israeli military action and embarrassing the government through other means. In a conversation with Ambassador July 3, Minister of Interior Eid al-Fayez said that public opinion on the Fatah-Hamas split was working against the IAF and in favor of moderates, but that Israeli actions (in a reference to recent IDF raids in Nablus and Jenin) could jeopardize this dynamic. As reported ref B, the IAF is also making use of the recent GOJ-Israel deal which allowed for the return, but continued incarceration, of four Jordanian prisoners; on July 11 the

IAF asked the government for permission to visit the prisoners and again called for their immediate release.

15. (C) Dr. Musa Keilani, a long-time political observer with family ties to both the security establishment and the IAF, old guard, suggested to PolCouns on July 9 that the spate of press stories and attacks on the Front were in large part a Government-led campaign to undermine the IAF in the run-up to the municipal elections (widely seen as a bellwether for later parliamentary elections). Keilani was dismissive of the impact, however, characterizing the back-and-forth as traditional political gamesmanship without much influence on support for the parties or voters, inclinations.
Rubinstein